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11 April 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant for Vietnam Affairs

SUBJECT : Proposal for Collection of Additional
H-Camera Photography in Indochina

1. This memorandum summarizes our 9 April discussion on the need for additional test and assessment of the U-2 H-camera photographic capability in the Indochina theater. Paragraph 4 below recommends that action be initiated to obtain approval for the additional tests.

2. Two U-2 H-camera missions were flown for test purposes on the coastal periphery of North Vietnam on 30 and 31 March. The purpose of the flights was to evaluate the feasibility of obtaining usable photography a significant distance inland along the NVN coast through the use of a special long focal length camera designated as an "H" configuration.

3. The two test missions demonstrated the feasibility of round-robin operation of the U-2 aircraft from Taiwan. However, the photography obtained was seriously degraded by weather conditions, primarily haze, to a degree which precluded a fair evaluation of its value and potential--if haze were absent--against national imagery objectives in the area. On the other hand, it is fair to say that when considerable haze is present--as is frequently the case in this region--the imagery obtainable even with the powerful "H" camera may turn out to be of only marginal value. It also has been determined that the quality of the film from the two test flights was degraded as a result of sub-standard processing. Action has been taken to insure against recurrence of this problem.

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4. The weather conditions for H-camera photographic operations off North Vietnam should begin to improve in the coming weeks. It is proposed, therefore, that action be initiated at this time to request approval for another test of the system in the near future. The test would involve the same objectives and ground rules as the previously approved flights, but would be geared specifically to good weather conditions. An assessment of the results of this test should provide a basis for judgment as to whether the H-camera capability should be employed on a regularly programmed basis to satisfy some portion of our photo-coverage requirements in southeast Asia. The Director, OSA, concurs in this proposal.

5. Recommendation: It is recommended that approval for such a further test be requested.

[Redacted Signature]

Roland S. Inlow

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Distribution

Addressee

Mr. Walsh

[Redacted]

D/OER

D/OSA

Exec Dir/NPIC

U-2 file

Chrono

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